**MA in Politics and Security Programme**

**Thesis Proposal Writing Guide**

You are about to start one of the most important requirements of your degree: the MA Thesis. The Thesis is a good opportunity for you to demonstrate your research and analytical skills, ideas, and creativity, in addition, what you have learned during your studies at the Academy.

A thesis is a research project where you investigate a particular issue on your own in consultation with your Thesis Supervisor. It must demonstrate your originality, your ability for critical analysis and independent thinking. A thesis needs to have a clear purpose and should be written in scholarly manner. Pure description or compilations of already known materials are not adequate. The selection of your Thesis topic and developing a good proposal are key ingredients for the work towards writing a successful Thesis. Selecting your Thesis Supervisor, who can be a good match with your research interests, someone who would be willing to devote her/his time to supervise your work and with whom you will be able to establish a good academic and working relationship is equally important in producing a successful thesis.

Please read carefully the Academic Regulations as well as the MA Thesis Style and Formatting Manual for more details. These documents will assist you with structuring and formatting your thesis as well as familiarizing you with the academic requirements of the Academy as related to the MA Thesis.

The goal of this guide is to help you start with your Thesis, i.e. the developing of your Thesis Proposal, which can serve as Chapter One of your Thesis as well. Writing a good proposal is an absolutely necessary process in writing a good Thesis. The Thesis Proposal will help you determine if your research is doable and also keep you focused while writing the Thesis. To make the proposal development process easy, the Programme curriculum requires students to work in three ascending stages:

1. **Submission of the Thesis topic and Research Question**

Requirements:

* Proposed title.
* Proposed supervisor, her/his full name and institutional affiliation.
* Short description of your topic.
* Research question(s).
* **Length of document must be 300-400 words** (details to be discussed in your Research Methods/Thesis Seminar classes).
* **Deadline: 14 Feb to Research Methods instructor and 1 Mar to the Administration.**

1. **Submission of draft I and draft II Thesis Proposal** (to Research Methods instructor)

Requirements: (Comments/questions under each section are to provide general guidelines. You may address each section individually depending on your research):

* **Title:** Keywords that you chose in your title should reflect the general idea of the Thesis that you plan to write. The title must be self-explanatory and unambiguous.
* **Executive summary:** What is your proposal about in brief? Include key aspects of your proposal that you elaborated on (aim, problems, literature, methods to be employed, etc.). This section should not exceed over one page double spaced.
* **Contents/Tentative thesis outline:** What issues, chapters and potential sections will your thesis consist of with approximate page numbers.
* **Statement of the problem/Research rationale:** Brief discussion on general and/or specific backgrounds of the issue to be addressed by your Thesis. What the unresolved or not investigated issues in your topic? Will your research fill the gap?
* **Research question(s):** What question(s) does your Thesis address? These are narrow and specific research questions. It can be one major research question or several (two or three) specific questions.
* **(Short) Literature review:** Review the existing literature (major debates, theories, ideas, concepts, findings, issues, problems etc.) on your topic. Demonstrate your familiarity and awareness of the current, up to date trends in your topic. Do not attempt to review all available literature, but focus on the most important and relevant ones to your topic/argument. Note that you will also have a far larger Literature review chapter in your Thesis. This section of your Thesis Proposal should be an abridged version of the main Literature review chapter.
* **(Short) Theoretical framework:** What specific theoretical approach will you use? What are the key theories and names? How are they tied to your research/problem?
* **Hypothesis/es:** What is/are the argument/s or affirmation/s in your thesis which you wish to test?
* **Research design/Methodology:** Will you use primary (your own) or secondary (other) data? Describe in detail how you will find your data. What kind of methods (survey, interviews, focus groups, content analysis, discourse analysis, process tracing, etc.) will you use? Explain why you are selecting your particular research method(s). Briefly state the advantages or limitations of your methods?
* **Potential outcome:** What do you assume (expect) to find out from this research?
* **Research significance:** What gap will your research fill? How is it different from other existing research? Why is your research important for academia? For politics? List at least three points to highlight your research significance.
* **Research limitations:** What are possible limitations of your research? List two to three such limitations.
* **Timeline of Thesis completion:** What are the exact dates and milestones you have planned to complete your Thesis in an orderly and timely manner?
* **References:** List the literature that you have used in your proposal using the *Central Asian Survey* style/format.
* **Length of the submitted document** must be **10-11 pages (excluding References)**, double spaced, 12 Times New Roman.)
* **Deadlines: 9 April (draft I) and 30 April (draft II)** to be submitted to your Research Methods instructor. (More details forthcoming in your class).

**III. Submission of the final Thesis Proposal** (to OSCE Administration)

* **Follow the same requirements as the draft version.** Consult with your Thesis Supervisor to modify your final Thesis Proposal where needed.
* **Deadline: 10 May.**